



The story of the (cherry blossom) tree.

Introduction:

The Buddha was inspired by nature. There is a lot to learn from nature. In our running life more and more we are disconnected with fauna. The present connection and identity for most people now a days is technology. You cannot fetishize the technology. It's just a tool. It's not the purpose. The purpose is always changing in the off-line mode. What is there to learn from nature.

This story, I sometimes use during my early morning meditation classes, is meant to share some insights. You can use it just to read and to contemplate or to use it as a means for (guided) meditation.

In this story I make use of the image of a cherry blossom tree (Tree of life) but also just a normal tree that connects with you is a wonderful and useful image.

In Japan, cherry blossoms, next to other meanings, also symbolize the impermanence of life, which is a major theme in Buddhism (everything is temporary and everything is interconnected). The cherry-blossom tree is known for its short but brilliant blooming season, a natural process that metaphorically describes human life.

The brilliance, fragility and transience of life

Tied to the Buddhist themes of mortality, mindfulness and living in the present, Japanese cherry blossoms are a timeless metaphor for human existence. Blooming season is powerful, glorious and intoxicating, but tragically short-lived — a visual reminder that our lives, too, are fleeting.

Why don't we marvel at our own passing time on earth with the same joy and passion? Why do we neglect to revel in life when it can end at any moment. Or in the grace surrounding us everywhere like possible: our family, friends, a stranger's smile, a child's laugh, new flavors on our plate or the scent of green grass? It is time, cherry blossoms remind us, to pay attention.

In short:

The Japanese use the short life of a cherry blossom before it is scattered by the wind and rain to symbolize the cycle of life, and they use it as a reminder to celebrate beauty. The Buddhist consider the opening of a cherry blossom as a symbol of wisdom because it is like the mind blooming into enlightenment. They also consider the cherry blossom as a reminder to exist in the present moment before life fades away.

Note in relation to meditation:

(Standing) If you want to use this story as a meditation you can do it standing in nature or in your garden or terrace and just connect with any tree that is asking your attention.

(Sitting down). If you want to use this story as a meditation and nature around you is not available, then just sit down at a place you feel at peace and at rest with yourself. A place where for a while you will not be disturbed.

The story of the (cherry blossom) tree

I invite you to connect with a tree in nature or, if nature is not available now, imagine a Cherry Blossom tree standing in a landscape.

The first thing to recognize is that a tree does not make any effort to be attractive. The tree is just available in the landscape. Undisturbed by other trees, animals, plants, houses or human beings. Undisturbed by what his or her environment thinks of it. The tree is just effortless being. Resting, breathing, showing its uniqueness. Flexible, rooted, not hiding for storms, rain or when the baking sun beats down. Just accepting. Not trying to be anything else than just his/her uniqueness, this tree. Showing his or her uniqueness in beauty. Yes beauty because its attracting you.



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A tree is showing us the ongoing cycle of life. The ongoing process of growing and renewal. It shows us how to be and how to stay rooted. It shows us the only simple things needed. Like water, soil, fertilizer, sun and air. It is the mirror of taking and giving and of letting go. It shows us that even having maybe many life cycles to make, also for a tree finally there will be an end. The tree shows us the seasons of life and the seasons in natural growth and renewal even in the process of getting older. The tree obeys nature.

Do you live in harmony with the seasons of your life? Do you recognize the beauty of all seasons? Many people live contradictory. They do not obey nature. Their rhythm is opposite from nature. Winter for instance is a period of rest, of making up balance and of preparing for the new four seasons to come. Summer is the period to flourish and to be in optimal strength.

If you think of your life how do you live? Very often, without even being aware, we live opposite. In summertime there is more light of the sun. More energy. We go to the beach to rest. In winter we have more darkness, longer nights to serve us and so the natural quest and offer to have more rest. In winter we use electricity to create more light so we can make longer working hours. We eat higher energetic food and, especially around European Christmas time and end of the year we reach the climax of our busy-ness as if life does not start up again the next year.

So winter is the time to recharge, to rest, to connect with the source and meaning of your life. To make up your balance sheet, build up wisdom, and to prepare for the next cycle to come.

In Spring the tree starts to make one step forwards in growth again. The new and energetic juice stream helps the tree to start its new life cycle. The buds of the leaves, waiting already from the end of autumn many months ago, unfold soft and in a bright and sunny green shining 'Sprouting Spring color'. And with this process the first blossoms appear. Opening to attract the right insects to help creating the fruit and the seeds for the next generation to come.

After only a short period of a couple of weeks. The blossoms drop their petals. The first giving back to nature again. Blown by the wind they are the first new fertilizers for the soil.

In summer the leaves turn darker in color. They turn into adults. Stronger, harder. The tree is strong and in optimum state for the breathing (photosynthesis) process. Giving back oxygen for animals and human beings to breathe.

When we mirror this to our lives we can ask ourselves some questions.

First of all we can ask ourselves why we continuously want to shine. It is not possible to always shine. It's only marketing that helps you to believe it is. Actually what you do is you force and punish your body if you do not obey nature like a tree. You do not obey nature, you do not respect nature, you do not accept and respect the beauty of yourself in the ongoing growing and transforming process. The second question you can ask yourself is; "what do I give back to the world? Am I only taking? What do I give?"

In Autumn every leaf turns into a flower. In many ways you can see autumn as harvest time. Time to give and time to let go. Creating space for something new to become.

First of all a tree shows us during this period there is an effortless and painless way to let go. Accepting change. It is necessary to grow. If you do not accept change there will be no growth. Without any effort the tree, just at the right moment drops its leaves. Sometimes with some help of the wind. The leaves are the fertilizers for the soil needed for the next generation to start-up there first of many possible life cycles.

Then the tree drops the fruit, the seeds. The fruit, the harvest to eat or to multiply as a guarantee (new) life has to go on. In nature it is just a question where the seeds fall down and how big the multiplying of life will be. That's why most of the time and growing at the right place and with the right circumstances the tree produces lots of seeds and/or fruits.

Again we can ask ourselves what is our harvest, how do we give back. Do we really take care for the next generation to come. Different than in nature we have the opportunity to plant our 'seeds' at the most wonderful and for the specific seed best places. Are we willing to do this? Is this connected with the purpose of our life?



Are we connected with nature? It's just a matter of connecting, of contemplation.

Being as a tree and obeying nature...
Living a more balanced lifestyle with our unique mission.

Frans Captijn

Host/Catalyst/Talenteer at
The Pavana Chiang Mai Resort Chiang Mai and
Captijn Insight workretreatprograms
Website: www.captijninsight.com
Email: captijninsight@gmail.com
Blog: www.captijninsightthailand.blogspot.com
skype: captijn.insight



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